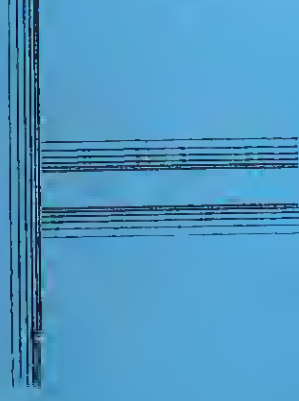


PIONEER

DAYS



BY

Myrtle (Relph) Benjamin

FORWARD

This history of the William Relph family was written by Myrtle (Relph) Benjamin, who was the third oldest of the eleven children of William and Rebecca Relph. Those of us who remember Grandmother Relph and recall some of the things she told us about the early experiences of the family are sure that Aunt Myrtle did a magnificent job of compiling this record. Therefore, we the descendants of William and Rebecca Relph affectionally dedicate this booklet to her memory.

We all loved and adored Aunt Myrtle because of her love of life and her deep and abiding faith in God and her confidence in an even better life in the world to come. We shall always remember her interesting stories of the past and we know that her wit and wisdom has been an inspiration to all who knew her. We feel that the author of the following poem must have been writing about some one just like Aunt Myrtle:

A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY DEARER THAN GOLD
OF A WOMAN WHOSE WORTH CAN NEVER BE TOLD
HAPPY AND SMILING, ALWAYS CONTENT
LOVED AND RESPECTED WHEREVER SHE WENT
TO A BEAUTIFUL LIFE CAME A PEACEFUL END
SHE DIED AS SHE LIVED, EVERY ONES FRIEND.

At the time Aunt Myrtle died, June 26, 1959, there was only our mother, Rebecca (Relph) Lofton, of the eleven children of William and Rebecca (Adams) Relph still living and she passed away on Dec. 15, 1960, just 16 days short of being 100 years from the date William Relph and Rebecca Adams were married.

Now they are all gone, but let us never forget the faith, the courage and the sacrifices of the members of this family who endured so much that we might have a better life.

We are deeply indebted to my sister Bertha (Lofton) Messinger of 131 West O St., McCook, NE 69001 for her untiring efforts in promoting the printing of this booklet. She has devoted countless hours in contacting the many relatives, seeking their approval and advice. Others who contributed valuable assistance were the members of Aunt Myrtle's family: Elma Caplin, Elsie German, Howard and Roy Benjamin.

Harley G. Lofton, Sr.
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LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

My father "William Relph" and one of his brothers, John Relph, left Pennsylvania and went west as far as Chicago, which was the end of the earth in those days. Land was selling for two dollars an acre but it looked like swamp land and father would have none of it. After working and scouting around awhile he went south as far as Lafayette, Indiana, which was only a small village at that time. He worked at various jobs there and around West Point. There was a lot of discussion at that time about which of these two towns would be the main city in that part of Indiana. It was there he met my mother, a very attractive girl, so he told us, and decided he had gone far enough. He bought a piece of land near Lafayette covered with what would be very valuable timber today, but at that time was used only to build log cabins, rail fences, and fire wood. Clearing land was a task and hard work.

Father was strong. He stood over six feet tall, very straight, due no doubt, to army training. He had dark curly hair, steel blue eyes and a black wavy beard. I never saw him without his beard but once. I shall mention that occasion later in my story. He also had a firm mouth, which we children never failed to respect but he was also kind and jolly.

He cleared part of the land, built a neat log cabin and on January 1st, 1861, he and my mother were married.

After the piece of land was cleared and the cabin built all the settlers far and wide would meet at the new place and have a "log rolling party." All of the logs, slashings and stumps were piled together in one huge pile, then in the evening the heap was set on fire and families and friends would eat out of the food baskets, play games, tell stories, etc. by the light of the fire and all had a jolly time.

The following year the first baby was born, Louey. Everything was lovely when the Civil war was declared and all was changed. Father enlisted but it was decided mother would stay on the little farm. They had a few cows, pigs and chickens and a team of horses. She had inherited some of her mother's Dutch thrift and was sure she could manage. After a short period of training the time came for father to leave with his troop. Mother told us it snowed the night before he left to join his troop and as he walked from the house he left his foot prints in the snow. They had planned that mother would meet him at the station when the train came through. She hitched the team to the buggy, and with her baby, drove to the station. She arrived just as the train was pulling out. Father saw her and leaned out the window, threw kisses,



Harry and Myrtle Benjamin

waved and shouted "goodbye." He wrote her later that he was glad she was not there when they entrained as many of the women became hysterical, some fainted; but mother was sure she would have been brave and sent him away with a smile, but when she got home and saw his foot prints in the snow she broke down and cried for a week.

Before leaving for the war father bought mother a gun and taught her how to use it as she was to stay alone in her little cabin with her baby. She told us that no one ever opened their door during those times without asking who was there, and it is said that is how the people in that part of the country came to be called "Hoosiers". They said it so often, it sounded like "Whosier" when cut short.

One night she heard a noise at the window. She went for her gun and quietly approached the window. Pulling back the curtain just as the window pane crashed, scaring her half to death. She nearly shot the neighbor's old white horse that was scratching his nose on the window.

Mother was an excellent nurse and was always ready and willing to help wherever she could. Smallpox was rampant at that time. She and the baby were vaccinated, then she went out nursing the neighbors. At this time beggars and bums became very annoying. She told us in order to keep them from bothering her, she kept a smallpox quarantine card on her door for months. She not only nursed the sick back to health but divided her vegetables, milk (from her cows), eggs, and whatever she had to divide with them. Every one shared and shared alike in those days.

Father came home but once during the war. He was wounded twice, one bullet shattering his shoulder and one causing a wound on his shin bone. The shin bone would bother him as long as he lived. As soon as he was able, he returned to active duty until the war ended. Although I was not born until sometime after the war was over, I can still remember the empty sleeves and peglegs and otherwise crippled soldiers of the Civil War.

Father thought he would never be able to do heavy work again, the wound in his shoulder having left his arm very weak. He sold their farm and moved in to Lafayette, took a business course and went to work in an office. He never learned to care for inside work and in time his shoulder mended and became stronger. His family now had grown in number, to four boys and two girls. He decided to try farming again and to teach the boys farming. We then moved to a place called "Sugar Grove" about fifteen miles southwest of Lafayette, where we lived for a number of years and two more girls were born there. Everywhere we

went we were beginning to hear talk of going "West." There were homesteads and tree claims to be had free, except for a small filing fee and a stipulated number of acres cultivated each year, a dwelling built and six months of each year residence for five years. The boys were growing up and father thought this a wonderful opportunity for the boys to get land as well as himself. We had heard stories of how settlers in Kansas had suffered devastation from grasshoppers, drouth, Indians, sickness and storms in winter, in fact, it was reported they were on the verge of starvation. People in our neighborhood were packing boxes and barrels of food and clothing to send to them. Mother told us children not to waste the apples, of which we had an abundance from our orchard, as the children in Kansas had no apples at all. After that we ate our apples, skins, cores and seeds, so the children in Kansas would not have to go hungry for apples, while they were decaying on the ground in our orchard.

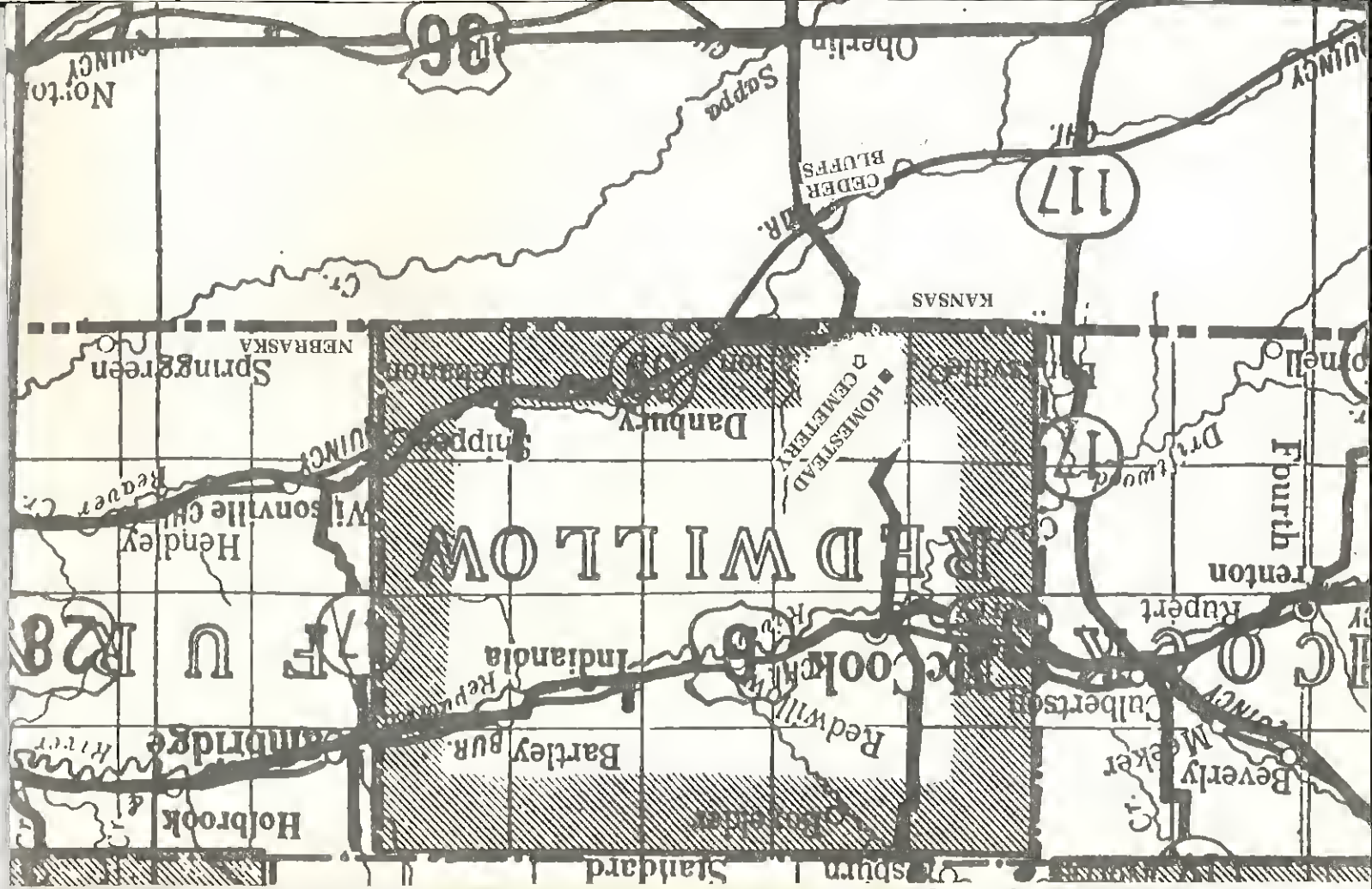
TRIP WEST

Father and the boys, John and Joe, were ready to leave for the "jumping off" place, as some of the neighbors called it. They were taking two teams of horses, implements, household goods, feed and seed and our two little dogs.

A bed for the boys was fixed in the wagon box. They would crawl in and out of one end. Other articles were piled over the wagon box to conceal it in case some one came snooping around. The emigrant cars had to be inspected at certain points of the trip. Once when the Inspector was looking thru the car, the boys and two dogs were in the hideout. One of the dogs ran out and barked and the man said "a dog." The other one ran out and barked and the man said "two dogs." One of the boys whispered that if they ran out the Inspector would say "four dogs," and they both laughed so hard they had to bury their faces in pillows so they would not be heard. Another time, when they stopped to unload the horses, and they did occasionally for exercise, the boys took the dogs out with them for a walk. After rambling round town for awhile and it was time to go back to the car, they missed one of their dogs. They would rather have missed the train than go without the dog so they ran up and down the streets whistling and calling when they saw him looking out of a window of a house. John ran to the door, opened it and the dog came bounding out and without a word they ran back to the car. The horses were loaded, the train ready to leave, and father very much worried no boys, no dogs in sight. They made it just in the nick of time getting a scolding for being such "pumpkin heads" for straying so far from the train.

They had many interesting and exciting experiences on the way. I do not remember how many days it took them to reach the Railroad terminal which was Kerwin, Kans. When they unloaded the horses one of them was too lame to start across the prairie and pull a heavy load. Father traded the horse for another one, paid the difference, loaded the wagon and spring wagon, which was tied behind one of the big wagons, and started across the plains. There were very few land marks, houses few and far between, roads were just a track and ran out at times. Father had a compass so kept to the general direction he knew he wanted to go. He also had his rifle he carried through the Civil War. He always said the gun was a present from Uncle Sam. The boys carried guns also just in case they would meet some unfriendly Red Skins. They camped along the way and finally arrived at Cedar Bluffs, Kansas. Settlers were few and this was indeed the end of the world. One family had a Post Office in their home and mail was brought in by Pony Express, about every two weeks. Father and the boys made Cedar Bluffs their headquarters while they built a sod house on father's homestead, about seven miles northwest across the line in to Nebraska. He hired two men who were supposed to know how to build a sod house but it was proved later that they didn't.

The neighbors who went west with father got cold feet when they reached the end of the railroad and went back. The country looked too big and wild for them but nothing was too rough to bluff father and he loved the challenge the wide open spaces presented. He wanted a place high and dry and he found one. We had seen so many floods along the valleys and low places of Indiana that father wanted to get away from any possibility of a flood. Why he passed up so much land before he stopped I don't know, except he promised us a home in Nebraska. He had to cross miles of the same kind of land in Kansas, walking most of the way, with his knapsack on his back and gun on his shoulder, until he got two miles over the state line, west of the last settlers, where he found just what he wanted. Other men had filed on homesteads; mostly young bachelors. They did not build sod houses but all built "dug outs". Just in case some of my readers won't know what a dugout is I will explain as best I can. By digging out a bank in a bluff or canyon, building a sod front, a dirt roof and leaving the floor dirt, they had "established a residence" as the law required, as part of their duties to entitle them to a final deed. Also a stipulated number of acres of the land had to be cultivated each year for five years. The soldiers were given the special right to make final proof at the end of three years.



HOMESTEAD, RED WILLOW COUNTY

Cedar Bluffs was named for a rock-bluff just south of Beaver Creek. The Bluff was covered with cedar trees. It was from this bluff father cut timbers for our sod house. With a special breaking plow the sod was turned, being tough because of the buffalo-grass roots matted in the sod. After the sod was turned with the plow it was cut in to about two foot lengths with a spade. The wall was built by laying them in the same formation as brick. The walls had to be kept straight so was trimmed both inside and out as the wall was built, spaces filled in with dirt and pounded firmly. Openings were left for windows and doors. Big timbers were used for ridge poles. Smaller timbers for rafters. Willows were used on top of the rafters and a layer of sod over the willows and dirt about two feet thick over the sod. After plastering the walls on the inside with a plaster made from a lime deposit in the canyon bank, one had a home quite neat, warm in winter and cool in summer. We had no rain the first summer we spent in Nebraska. The second summer, however, was another story. It rained and rained the sod roof began to leak and it dripped for days after the last rain, making a mess of everything.

THE FAMILY ARRIVES

Mother and children were left at grandma Adams in Lafayette to wait until the house was built and were caught in an epidemic of scarlet fever. We hadn't as yet been exposed so mother decided to leave at once for Nebraska. She wrote father that we were leaving Lafayette immediately, not waiting for an answer from him to tell us that it would be all right. She did not realize how long it would be before he received the letter or if he could meet us in Kerwin, Kansas where he would have to drive several days to meet us. We hurriedly packed our baggage, lunch and supplies, and with many tears bade farewell to our loved ones, boarded the train for a strange country and new experiences.

This was the first train ride for the younger children, and how they enjoyed it! It was, however, a long, tiresome trip for mother. The train was crowded. Many families were going to Kansas and Nebraska, and some going to Iowa. I no longer remember how long it took us to travel from Lafayette, Indiana to Kerwin, Kansas but we made many new friends and passed the time by playing games and telling stories. One little girl cried and said that she did not want to go on the train but did want to go to Kansas. One lady was very nervous and every time the train would swing or

sway she would grab the end of the seat and clutch it with both hands with her eyes shut as she thought the train was going over. When we crossed the Mississippi river mother thought the nervous lady was going to faint. This amused us very much as we were enjoying the dangerous crossing.

Eventually we arrived in Kerwin, Kansas. It was a day to be remembered as it was one of Kansas' famous wind-dirt storms. The wind blew a gale and one could scarcely breathe the air it was so full of dirt and debris. Kerwin was a young town but had a hotel and board sidewalks until the wind storm hit. The wind picked up the board sidewalks and tore them to pieces. The youngsters were kept inside the hotel all day. After being shut up on the train for such a long time we were wild to get outside and run. There were sick folks in the hotel and the mothers tried to keep the children quiet to no avail...the sick people complained and the children became more and more noisy. We were at the hotel when father arrived. We were all wild with joy to see him. We stayed another day to rest the horses before starting on our long journey across the prairie to our future home.

My oldest sister, Lou walked miles on that trip. She was eighteen and I was eleven. Father told us to watch for rattle snakes as the prairie was infested with them.

Imagine if you can how the country looked to us. Not a house in sight. Not a tree. After living in Indiana where it was thickly settled with beautiful trees everywhere, made the prairies look even more barren to us. There was no sign of a road; just a buffalo trail that zigzagged here and there thru the grass. The only thing in sight was bleached buffalo bones, the short buffalo grass, occasionally a herd of antelope keeping a safe distance and watching our slow progress. The ground was broken here and there by prairie dog towns and the dogs would run and stand on top of the mounds and bark at us. When we got near they would give one last bark, a flip of their tails and disappear down their holes. We saw also a few long eared jack rabbits.

One day when Lou and I were walking ahead of the wagon we saw something which we thought was a post at the edge of the canyon. We detoured to investigate and found it to be a dug-out. It was the first we had seen and to our amazement real live people were living in it. We had to have some excuse for being so curious so we asked for a few matches. We had heard father say it was dangerous to travel across the prairie without matches to build a backfire in case of prairie fire. (He did not smoke and found he had nary a match). The lady of the house was very pleased to see us as it had been weeks since she had seen anyone. She asked us to

sit down, then plied us with many questions; where we were from, where we were going, and was disappointed when we told her we were going on, as she was hoping she would have some near neighbors. She had not been there long and was very lonely.

She had a number of children, all well, robust and full of pep. Her husband and boys were away gathering buffalo bones. We did not ask for what, but were informed later. The place was very neat and clean and we were surprised to see what a nice home a dug-out could make. We stayed and visited so long that when we got outside we could just see the folks far in the distance. Father never drove a team faster than a walk so by running most of the way we soon caught up with them. They did not know where we had gone and were beginning to worry. Father was very irate, and greeted us with "don't you Pumpkin heads know better than to go straying away on the prairie: Do you want to get lost? Don't get out of sight of this wagon again." When we told him we had found a dug-out with people living in it and gave him the matches he did not scold us any more and said he had not seen any signs of habitation and did not want to take the time to hunt for us as in that vast expanse of sameness it was so easy to lose ones direction and take off in the opposite direction. Late in the afternoon we came to a sod house with a family living in it.

Father stopped and asked if we could spend the night and get some hay for his horses. We had our own bedding and provisions. He was willing to sleep in the sod barn but the nights were quite cool and he would appreciate it very much if they would permit mother to make a bed on the floor for the rest of the family. They had only two rooms, and a family of children, but they also had the hospitality of the pioneers. "Surely, come in, we have lots of room and so happy to have company!" Father brought in our "grub" boxes and mother helped get supper. We put everything on the table and all ate together like long lost relatives who had come to make them a visit; and visit we did.

The man of the house had been a soldier. He and father had many things to talk about. They exchanged many thrilling stories of their experiences in the army. We children never tired of listening to war stories. We played games and had a wonderful evening. Finally mother spread our quilts and blankets on the (dirt) floor with some pieces of carpet laid next to the dirt floor under the blankets. We were soon sleeping soundly after a long, hard day, and if we were not comfortable, we did not know it.

In the morning we tumbled out, folded our bedding and had breakfast together. Father had butchered several hogs before leaving Indiana and he surely knew how to cure pork. He had brought a large piece of bacon and a ham with him when he came to meet us, to eat on our way home. The folks where we spent the night said it was the first meat of any kind they had tasted, except for wild meat, since leaving their home in the east. Father left them half of what was left of the ham and bacon. Not a cent would they take for the nights lodging. After many thanks and goodbyes we were again on our way.

Another night we stopped with a family by the name of Wiggins. This was our last night on the road before reaching Cedar Bluffs, Kansas, arriving the evening of April 1st. Mother thought from the looks of things that we had been April Fooled. The men were all carrying pistols and the whole scene looked like "a present day Western movie." From the wooded bluffs around Cedar Bluffs father took timber for his sod house.

The following morning sister, Lou and I went with father to our new home. Father had staked the corners of the homestead and on the stakes had placed buffalo skulls. John and Joe and the men had the house almost completed but it was settling off to one side and leaning toward the east. The house was built of sod.

NEW HOME

The next day we all went out to our new home "the soddy" And what a home! Mother knew it would not be a palace but was not prepared for the shock she was in for. Sod walls, brush and dirt ceilings, no windows or doors as yet. We hung strips of carpet and quilts over the openings temporarily. Father and John left immediately for Orleans, Nebraska to get windows and lumber for the doors. It took them several days to make the trip. Now Mother proved bow brave she was and no one doubted her pioneer spirit. Next to John, Joe was the oldest. At this time he was fourteen and had to be the man of the house until father's return. There was not a neighbor closer than Cedar Bluffs; we had no well and had to haul water from "The Bluffs" as Cedar Bluffs was called by every one who lived in that vicinity. By making the trip to Cedar Bluffs for water about three times a week we managed until much later; father found time to dig a well. After the long trip with so many children we needed water for washing clothes and after everything was clean we were very careful about taking care of our clothes and keeping them clean and conserving water became a real, and a very important, duty for all of us. The days we did not go after

water we slid the barrels down poles off the wagon and hauled wood from Dry Creek a few miles west. We also gathered "buffalo-chips". Mother tho't buffalo-chips was the last straw and with a pair of old gloves on her hands, and a turned up nose, she poked them into the stove. They made a good hot fire and left heaps of ashes. They were thoroughly dry as it did not rain all that summer and we thought it never would. Indiana was a wet state.

Before father and John returned with the windows and doors we six children became ill. Mother was frantic. What could be wrong and what to do? six children all with a fever! Nothing had been unpacked yet except the bare necessities. As I have stated before mother was a very good nurse and by the time about half of us broke out all over with red spots mother knew we had measles. She also knew what had been wrong with the sick folks at the hotel in Kerwin. In order not to spoil their business they did not put up a quarantine sign and I imagine eventually all the guests in the hotel had the measles. There was no other place to stay even if there had been a quarantine sign. The measles was not as bad as scarlet fever so mother always believed she made a good decision when she left Lafayette when she did.

We had no cow so there was no milk for the sick. The water was warm in the barrels before we got it home, so there was no cold water. Mother had one cureall for all ailments-ugh! "castor oil." Regardless of how seriously ill any one was, if they recovered, it was the castor oil that did it. With the water so warm and all of us thirsty from fever, mother made gallons of tea. We played "Indians" when we were well enough and joked about hanging on to our scalps. We were so red we all thought we looked like Indians. After the news spread that we had measles we had no callers. One bachelor called to see if he could be of assistance. He had seen sister, Lou and we all thought that was what he was interested in instead of the help he might give us. His name was Willard Fields. He did help us. We all craved lemons; he rode horse back to Oberlin, Kansas and came back with two dried up lemons. We each got a taste of lemonade and it was the most delicious drink we ever had.

Father finally arrived home. Lou, and Jim, my youngest brother, were very ill. The same young man who brought the lemons went to Oberlin and brought the doctor. The doctor looked us over, said it was measles and left us some powders which he wrapped up in little squares of paper..which was the way they dispensed medicine in those days when there were no pills or capsules. Father asked mother to make the doctor a strong cup of coffee. Father then helped him on his

horse, started him towards home, came back in the house, picked up the medicine and threw it in the stove. Mother asked him what he was doing, and he said "the darned fool was so drunk he wouldn't know whether he was giving us strychnine or some other poison." Of course we all eventually recovered without medication...While we were still very ill in bed the house began slipping and squeaking. Dirt began falling in our faces and sod began falling from the west wall on the inside and the east wall on the outside. Father got poles and braced the ridge-pole. Mother said the house wanted to go east and she thought she would go with it. Mother took sheets and tacked them up to the ceiling. By the time the first one was well enough to get out of bed one after another developed measles. Lucky for all of us that father and mother had had measles when children.

Father and the boys began boring for water which certainly was the most important item at that time. They believed they would strike water at forty feet or less. Father had brought his well boring machinery from Indiana and had just enough pipe to go about forty feet. There was no water at that depth and more shaft could not be found in that area. Digging was the only solution and dig they did. John dug around the hole and father drew up the dirt in buckets on a windlass. They encountered layers of sand and had to install curbing against cave-ins. Lumber was required to make the curbing which called for another long trip. Father brought a man back with the lumber to help finish the well. Rock was also encountered at different levels and had to be broken up with a pick. It was rough going and took a long time.

The well was now down around one hundred and twenty five feet and John kept yelling up that he could hear Chinamen talking, when in a very excited voice he yelled "water!" John was let down and brought up in the same bucket that was used to bring the dirt up from the well. A curb about ten feet in depth was placed at the top of the well to keep rodents from burroughing and perhaps falling in to the well, and a box four feet high at the top with a lid to keep dust and children from falling in to it. A derrick with a rope and pulley a bucket on each end of the rope completed the well. Drawing the water did not look like hard work for father and the boys but it took two girls to draw a bucket. To make the job easier we usually sang "The Old Oaken Bucket" while pulling. The water was very clear, cool and delicious; and one of the greatest thrills of our lives.

The man father brought to help with the well remained with us until it was completed. One evening while they were

having their usual exchange of stories they hit on the subject of army life. The man told us how he and another fellow had confiscated a grind stone for use in sharpening their bayonets. He said the other fellow picked up the grindstone and carried it on his shoulders several miles to camp. After the grindstone episode the soldiers called the fellow "Grindstone Bill." Father roared, grabbed the man by the hand and said "I was your comrade, I am Grindstone Bill." They talked far into the night until mother begged them to go to bed so she could get some much needed rest. They did not go to bed but took their chairs outside and talked until mother called them to breakfast. We all asked why they did not recognize one another. Father said, "How could I recognize one grain of wheat from the rest in a bin of wheat." The soldiers had all worn beards, were dressed alike in their uniforms, and it had been twenty years.

While father and John had been busy with the well, Joe did his best to get a garden spot ready for planting. The soil was too dry to work up well. After a lot of hard work getting the clods pulverized and raked smooth we planted vegetables and sweet corn. Not a seed sprouted or a shoot peeped above the ground. In the fall we sifted the dirt and kept some of the seeds which were as dry as when we had taken them from the cans we kept them in. We had no "garden-sas" that year but lots of optimism. There were so many dry years to come that we almost lost our optimism.

INDIAN SCARE

Some time before we arrived in the west the settlers were warned of Indians on the march through that part of the country, and although they were not on the "war-path" it would be just as well to provide some protection for their wives and families. It was said, there were no good Indians but dead Indians. They still indulged in plundering as they moved from place to place.

Settlers were scattered, so for protection they gathered together to build a fort. The fort was built of the popular material used for all buildings - sod. The ridge pole and rafters of timbers from the Bluffs; one large door in one end and two windows in each side. Around this building some distance from the fort a wall was built, six feet high and three or four feet thick with peepholes all around the building to look through and shoot through if necessary. They wasted no time preparing the fort after having received the warning, moving in to the enclosure as soon as it was completed. The wagons of feed and supplies were lined up between the fort and the wall. Horses, cows,

chickens and all livestock were crowded inside the circle made by the wagons, and with all the guns and ammunition we all felt quite safe and protected.

After remaining close to the fort for a few days two of the men decided to scout around and see if there were any signs of Indians. Mounting their horses and riding up Beaver Creek for a few miles they encountered a small band of Indians and ponies. Making friendly signs and offering to shake hands, the Indians made no move, so believing they were friendly, they failed to put anyone on rear guard as they rode away and both men were shot in the back and killed. The Indians rode off to their camp not far from where they were encountered.

The two white men shot by this band of Indians were the first to be buried in the first cemetery in that locality. Other men from the fort went out and found the dead men and brought their bodies back to the fort. All remained at the fort until they were sure the Indians had moved on as they knew they were greatly outnumbered by the Indians.

One brave bachelor, refusing to join the others in the fort, remained on his claim in his "dug-out," barred the door and waited. The Indians surrounded the place and finding the door barricaded, broke the only window and getting on his hands and knees peeked in the window to see inside and as his head came thru the opening the bachelor shot him and he tumbled in to the room. The Indians being very superstitious, mounted their ponies and galloped away without further investigating the place. The only inconvenience the bachelor suffered was having to bury the Indian. This was the last Indian scare for some time, however, they did take everything with them that they could find and carry. The settlers returned to their respective homes and used the fort for a community center and for church services, keeping it intact as a fort for protection in case of future need. The children of the community thought it great fun to get sticks for guns and play at shooting Indians through the peep-holes in the wall around the building whenever our parents were holding some social function at the fort. We were not brave enough to venture far from the fort after hearing all the stories about what the Indians did and might do again.

CHURCH SERVICES HELD AT FORT

A friend came to tell us there was to be church services held in the old fort at Cedar Bluffs. We were all up bright and early on that Sunday morning and dressed in our very best, all piled in to the springwagon (a light wagon with springs

under the box). Father had built an extension on the back and installed an extra or third seat. Even with this extra seat when we were all loaded it was a tight squeeze for ten. There was a saying among the neighbors that they knew "Bill Relph" by the long spring-wagon. The preacher, also a homesteader in the region, by the name of "Jack Langly" with a wife and two small boys, tall, dark, but not handsome, not dressed too well and barefooted. His only theological training was what he had learned by studying his Bible. Even so, he could give a good sermon and sing quite well with the help of his wife, who lead the singing. She was also tall, slender, and well liked. Incidentally, father, mother and each of us children had shoes for special occasions and winter: we did, however, go barefooted in the summer and loved it.

The preacher wanted to organize an undenominational group so we could come to church and feel at home, regardless of the name of the church they had originally belonged to. We called the preacher "Uncle Jack". Many of the people came with ox teams hitched to wagons. Every one came from far and near, bringing their Bibles, any hymn books they could find, and baskets of food, which we all pooled together, laid out on table clothes spread on the grass under the trees beside Beaver Creek. If there were any ants or other insects at the picnic, I do not remember. We sat on rough planks resting on blocks of wood, used for seats in the church, not too comfortable as I remember, but no one complained. After eating our lunch, which we enjoyed very much, we visited with neighbors we knew and got acquainted with the new far-away neighbors many of whom we had not met before. Soon we departed for home, feeling we had spent both an enjoyable and profitable Sabbath. Thereafter we attended Sunday services quite regularly, weather permitting. The services were held outside beneath the trees. We sang old familiar hymns which we all knew, as we had no music. We felt that where two or more were joined together IN HIS NAME, we would be cared for and watched over, but the men kept their pistols in their belts altho' they did stack their guns in the corner of the fort as they came in...within easy reach, just in case.

Father bought a cow and a pair of chickens. A rooster and a hen...that is. He had gotten the chickens earlier and mother planned to raise some baby chicks. We all kept a close watch over that hen and had given up hope of ever getting an egg. Mother said if the old hen didn't lay an egg before the Fourth of July we would chop off her head and celebrate the Fourth by eating her. The day before the

Fourth some one heard a loud cackling, and such excitement! We all began a wild search and found an egg. We children were positive the hen had heard mother's threat. Her life was spared and in time she was put on a setting of eggs and hatched herself a nice family of chicks which we all cared for like gold nuggets.

BUFFALO HUNT

The summer had been so dry our larder was really getting low on provisions. Even the meat supply was running low. Father and some men decided to go buffalo hunting. The buffaloes were still plentiful farther west, near the Colorado border. With two teams of horses and two wagons, provisions for themselves and feed for the horses, bedding and enough salt to cure the meat, they took off. There was no means of communication with the homefolks so we did not hear any news from them. They were gone about three weeks and we were becoming very much worried for fear they had encountered hostile Indians or had run into some other sort of trouble. One of the men was a Mr. Gregory. His mother became so worried about them that she came to our house to see if we had heard news about them. We had tea and Mrs. Gregory read the leaves in the bottom of the cup, and told us not to worry, that all was well and that they would soon be home. Very shortly after this visit the men returned home late at night. All was well and their only trouble was horse trouble.

There were herds of wild horses roaming the prairie. One night a herd of wild horses came in to their camp and attacked the horses, which were tethered out on ropes so they could eat grass as they had not taken any hay for them. Three of the horses broke loose and went with the wild herd. They were so beaten up by the wild herd some scars were visible until the horses got their new coats the next spring. Old Dan, a white horse, had scars from his battle as long as he lived. The lariat that tethered Dan must have been stronger than the rest as he did not break loose. They had no choice but to find their horses. Two men remained at camp and the other two with some cooked buffalo meat, biscuits and guns took off on foot. After tramping for several days they came upon a cowboy camp. They stayed there that night and were entertained royally and the next morning the cowboys went along on the horse hunt, all mounted on borrowed horses. The lost horses were located, lassoed and led back to the ranch. Leaving the cowboys, they were soon back to their own camp with the runaways. One of the horses was so badly injured that it died, leaving the hunters with three horses and two wagons loaded with meat. The horses

were very nervous and still scared, as they had been no match for a fight with the wild stallions.

The hunters had killed many buffaloes in a very short time. A herd stampeded on their way to water in a creek near where the men were hunting. When the herd got near enough to the water to detect its scent they took off at full speed and it is a tragedy for anything or anyone unfortunate enough to be in their path. The hunters, being near the stream, noticed what resembled a hill coming at them, but after watching for a time they decided it was dust. By this time they could make out buffalo heads with shaggy manes. There were hundreds of them heading straight for the hunters. The hunters lost no time scrambling back down the canyon, taking refuge under a projection in the canyon bank. Just like the pictures in the movies, they poured down the bank, right over the men and never stopped until they ran out in to the water belly deep, plunging their noses in the water and drank and drank. It was from this herd they got most of the buffalo they killed. Father remained to skin the animals and pack the meat. Since they had killed so many animals father only saved the best parts of the meat, and altho' he disliked leaving so much of the meat to go to waste, they could only haul so much of it home. Father's companion returned to camp for the horses and wagons and soon they were on their way homewards.

The night before starting for home they used the remaining flour for biscuits which they baked in the frying pan over their camp fire. The biscuits with buffalo meat was all they had to eat on their return trip home. Their supply of coffee and beans was exhausted. Their salt had been sufficient to take care of the buffalo meat and if the wild horses had left them alone they would have been home a week sooner. Old Dan did not get loose to celebrate with the wild horses but the night before leaving for home he did get loose and instead of running away got in to the "grub-box" and ate every last biscuit, baked for the homeward trek. Consequently, Buffalo meat was the diet for almost a week. With three horses pulling the heavily loaded wagons and in not too good condition, the going was slow. The men walked all the way home to lighten the load. They saw no signs of Indians and the cowboys had been friendly...not at all like the wild and woolly cowboys we had heard about.

Well do I remember the night they arrived home. It was late and we were in bed sleeping soundly but were soon awakened by the commotion. Mother and Lou got the men something to eat...lots of coffee bread and butter and whatever else they could find already prepared. When

mother asked them if they would like her to prepare some buffalo meat, they declined readily and politely. They divided their meat with the neighbors and that with an occasional antelope was our winter's supply. We were all fond of pork but it was some time after this before we got our start in hogs. The buffalo meat must have been first rate for hors d'oeuvres or appetizers as the hunters ate all the bread mother had on hand and she mixed up hot cakes and baked for an hour. Mr. Gregory said from that day on he never did get enough to eat to satisfy his hunger. The stories father told us about the buffalo hunt during his leisure time were many and of great interest to us children.

SCHOOL AT CEDAR BLUFFS

It was now time to think about school for the children. There was no school near and as the "soddie" had begun leaning at a dangerous angle father decided to build a new house and would have to use the timbers from the old one, so it was decided we would move to Cedar Bluffs to be near a school. He found a vacant house and got permission to move in to it. A number of the other settlers had also moved to Cedar Bluffs with their children to be near the school. It was not difficult to find empty houses as many of the easterners had gone back home for the winter and some had gone back to stay, with their folks, fed up with the wild and woolly west. They just didn't have what it took.

We moved to Cedar Bluffs. We had our winter's meat supply; father and the boys hauled wood from Beaver Creek for fuel and it was a big job as the cook stove is the only stove we owned and had to do for heating as well as cooking. The horses were turned out to fend for themselves. There was no work for them during the winter and the Buffalo grass was thick and they came thru the winter in fine shape. Our cow went to Cedar Bluffs with us. We had a sod barn for her and during the day tethered her near grassy plots. We took one team to town as a means of transportation to and from the homestead while building the new house. We had a number of near neighbors and felt that we had returned to civilization. We had a very warm fall. No storms and our house was very comfortable.

During the winter father and the older boys started building the new house. They tore the old one down hauling the sod out on the fields, using the timbers for the new house, which consisted of three large rooms on the ground floor, and one room dug-out about four feet deep, sod walls two feet thick and three feet high with a door opening in to the kitchen from this room with one, one-half window for light. This room was used for storage and cellar; also in case of

Indians, if we were surprised and unable to get back to Cedar Bluffs and the fort.

I believe we had six months of school that winter. In the east we had had nine months of school, making the six months seem very short. Our teacher's name was Mrs. Rice and classes were held in her kitchen. There were fourteen of us. Mrs. Rice had two children. We had benches to sit on and boxes for desks. The house had three rooms, one unoccupied. Later we found some stray boards, hauled them into the vacant room laying them as best we could for a floor. In this room we danced for exercise when it was too cold to play outside. Some of the children knew how to dance and some of the boys called the square-dances, and whistled and sang for our music. We liked our teacher and tried to be good, and I suppose learned something from our books which were the ones we brought with us from Indiana. Several had to study from the same book. Our teacher also knew how to dance. As far as I can remember my main accomplishment was the fact that I learned to dance. For our entertainment we met evenings at the neighbors and held spelling contests. After spelling for awhile the table and chairs were pushed out of the way and we danced. Some one would bring a violin for music. My parents objected to dancing and for some time we kept it a secret. Some one spilled the beans, however, and we received a good lecture. Eventually they agreed to let us dance as that was about the only entertainment at that time. Mother and father did not attend the spelling contests as the stork was bovering over our home pretty close at that time.

Christmas came. Our first Christmas in the west. For Christmas we received a few treats and a box through express of useful things from grandma Adams of LaFayette and on Christmas eve, a new baby sister. The new baby sister was named Minnie Elizabeth. Sister Rebecca, then six years old, thought the baby sister came in the box from grandma Adams. Now, years later, she wonders what kind of a dummy she must have been. But of course six year olds were not told everything as they are now... (which I believe takes much fun and fancy from the small children of today.) I was twelve years and knew the baby did not come in the Christmas box, but would not have told that to Rebecca for anything.

We spent many evenings at home that winter spelling. Father pronounced the words. Sometimes we stood in a row, playing a "spelling-down" contest, and some times writing the words on our slates. We had games of checkers and dominoes but never saw a deck of cards until some time later; when with further lectures about going to the

bow-wows, we were allowed to play cards too but never until the usual studies and spelling lessons were finished.

HOME AGAIN ON THE PRAIRIE

Spring came and school closed. We began preparing to return to the homestead. The weather looked like a storm was brewing and the horses were still loose on the range. The neighbor men went out looking for the horses when the storm struck. It was a real spring blizzard. We knew the horses would drift with the storm but had no idea where they were. One fellow went out looking for the horses after the storm was over. Snow was piled in high drifts. He rode in to our place and much to his surprise and joy he found the entire herd coming in together, apparently for a drink of water at the well. We were all happy that they came in and the men were saved long rides looking for them and we needed them as it was nearing time for spring plowing.

We were soon moved in to our new house. It had been plastered on the inside with plaster made from lime found in the canyon banks and was plentiful. Father had gotten lumber and had laid floors in the two main rooms. This was the only house at that time that had wood floors. Muslin was tacked to the ceiling which made quite a nice home. However, I shall never forget the big job after rains leaked through, taking the muslin all down, washing it and ironing it before tacking it back on the ceiling. It was this spring the first census was taken in this part of Nebraska. A young man by the name of Carey Eaton came to our house on horseback. He was dressed like a cowboy and wore a large cow-puncher hat. He had a black mustache and the jolliest laugh. While mother was giving our names and birth places all from Indiana, he said we must be Hoosiers, and of course we were all except Minnie Elizabeth, who was born in Cedar Bluffs. He was from Indiana, a few counties from where we came from and a Hoosier too. Mr. Carey Eaton asked father if he had any guns. Father said "no". The guns were hung on pegs in plain sight; five in all. We all began to laugh, the assessor looking at the guns and trying to look serious, thinking no doubt that father had told a big one. Father said all the guns but one belonged to the boys and that one was given to him by Uncle Sam and it had never been assessed. The Spencer rifle is still in the family.

Mr. Eaton and his brother had a dairy south of McCook for many years after McCook became a city and will no doubt be remembered by many of the older people still living there. Carey Eaton returned to Indiana and married "the girl he left behind him" when he came west. He never returned with his bride, as many of the other young men did who went back east for their sweethearts.

About this time father informed us he was going to work for the Burlington railroad company. The railroad was being extended from Indianola to Denver. When he came home he told us there was going to be a town just north of our homestead. There was only a little dugout on the bank of the Republican river then but that would be the new townsite. The town was named McCook. The Burlington was talking of a roundhouse and machine shops to be built there. The town was soon planned and people began moving in, coming from all directions in covered wagons. By the time the railroad was finished and trains were running, houses sprang up like mushrooms. Soon a store, livery barn and numerous places of business were established. The town was growing and growing fast. We did not have to drive to Indianola for our supplies now; but did have to ford the Republican river as it was some time before a bridge was built. The river was full of quicksand and crossing was dangerous. When it was froze over they crossed on the ice and that was risky in the spring when the ice began to thaw and when the floating ice cakes filled the river no one tried to cross, except in case of an emergency. Then a man would jump from one cake of ice to another. Brother John crossed once when my sister Lou was sick and needed medicine. With a long pole for balance he jumped from cake to cake. It was very dangerous but he made the trip over and back successfully.

After the ice had gone out of the river John crossed with a team of horses. The channel had shifted and changed the river bottom. Instead of the usual ford bed he drove into quicksand and bed. The wagon sank in the sand, the horses feet sank and could not move. John got out of the wagon and moved his feet so they would not sink. One horse would have been lost had not John held his head up until help arrived. The man who helped told later that when they were safely on solid ground that John put his arms around the horse's neck and cried saying "old boy I would have gone down with you before I would have let you drown." Many horses and whole herds of cattle lost their lives in the quicksand before bridges were built.

About 1881 Sister Lou wanted to do something for herself and it was decided she would go to Omaha and learn dress-making. When she finished the course she returned home and was soon married. About a year later she died after lingering a few weeks. She and her premature baby were the first to be buried in what we named "Pleasant Prairie Cemetery," where now my parents, brother Joe and wife, some of their children and my neighbors are buried.

HORSE THIEVES

Horse thieves were not uncommon in the early days and when caught the settlers were not very lenient with them. They took the law into their own hands and a rope or a bullet put them out of business.

Father used to locate new-comers and one day a man came to our house looking for a location. Father hitched up the team and took him out to look over a place he said he had liked. It was late when they got back and father asked him to spend the night as he was walking. He accepted. He had admired our big horse and said we should have a mate for him. Father said he had had but lightning had killed him. Next morning he left saying he was going to file on a piece of land. The next night he stayed with some neighbors who had recently arrived from Iowa. He had a fine team of horses. The next morning the stranger was gone and so were the horses. The alarm was given and all the men mounted horses and rode in every direction. They hunted for a week and no one found a trace of them. Finally they gave up the search. The team was a great loss to the owner. About two weeks later John and Joe were hunting antelope and noticed horse tracks near an abandoned dug-out. They investigated saw evidence of horses being there recently and the tracks of one man, showing three cornered patches on the sole of his boots. He had an accomplice as there were two foot prints. Apparently they foraged food for themselves and horses at night, hid during the day and traveled at night. Perhaps my brothers were not as good at reading signs as an Indian but it was plain to be seen that the fellow who was looking for land was in reality looking for horses. They were never caught. We saw no more horse thieves in our neighborhood after that but there were plenty of them in the country for some years.

The only good horses were brought from the east and when any one lost a horse they had to be replaced by bronchos. Wild horses roamed the western part of the state. We never saw any except two that stayed for a year near our place. My brothers tried a number of times to catch them but their horses were never swift enough to catch the wild ones. That fall they moved on and we never saw them again. Father bought a number of ponies from the cowboys who often stopped at our place. One cowboy who spent the night with us had had his feet frozen so badly he had to have all of his toes amputated and could hardly walk...but he could ride in the roundups and tell some exciting stories about his experiences.

HAILSTORM

None of us ever forgot the worst hail storm on record, before or since. The wind blew a terrific gale and the hail stones were as large as eggs...the hail broke out all of our windows and was hitting everything in the house, the force of the wind driving it in thru the broken windows. Father tried to shout above the storm and the crying of the children, to tell us all to get to the cellar. Mother was praying and carrying the smaller children trying to get through the wreckage to the cellar. The cow and some horses were tied to a picket and the boys wanted to rush out to get them but father told them to get to the cellar with the rest of the family. The only light we had was when the lightning flashed and with the roar of the wind and thunder it was almost impossible for mother and father to know just how many of the children were obeying orders. When father peeked thru the door to see how the storm was, he found it had stopped and told us all to come in to the kitchen. Father and the boys started out to find the stock, the boys starting barefoot...the hail was six inches thick and father made them go back and get their boots on. While they were gone mother lit a lamp and we viewed the wreckage. Everything was covered with hail, and dirty water stood on the floor an inch deep. We had left our supper dishes on the table, and they were strewn all over the kitchen and a lot of them broken. The boys found the cow and old Dan still tethered but the other horses had broken loose and got away. Old Dan had scares from the hail until the next spring when he grew a new coat and the cow had lumps all over her from being pounded with the big hail stones. The lost horses were found about a mile from the house...they had drifted with the wind and found shelter under a ledge in the canyon. Everything green had been obliterated and there was nothing left of our garden or crops. The storm was much worse in other sections and a large number of cows and horses were killed. Dead rabbits and birds lay everywhere and the whole country was devastated. Many settlers gave up and went back east but father carried on, hoping for a good year or years ahead.

We had no school that winter but father taught us at home. We had brought books from Indiana. The following spring people came from the east in large numbers and settled near us. Many of them camped at our place until they were able to build a house and dig a well. We had a deep well and it served the whole camp.

Enough families had moved in so we were planning on a school the following winter. Mr. Nettleton was superintendent of Redwillow county schools at that time. Until the

school house was built school was held in a vacant dug-out. Brother Joe was sent away to take a teacher's course and he taught a three month's subscription school that winter. I believe he received \$15.00 per month. We had the best crops in that neighborhood that year than any year since we came west. Father helped all the settlers with help and advice. Father bought more livestock and chickens. John came home to help father with the farming. We still had to tether the horses out on the prairie at night to graze as there were no fences at this time.

We cut corn fodder, raised some cane for feed and mowed what prairie grass there was for feed but kept that for winter. One afternoon we had a severe lightning and thunder storm. John went out to bring in the horses and we heard him crying. He was almost a man but when he cried you could hear him for some distance. We all rushed out to see what it was all about and John had one of the Horse's heads in his lap, crying his heart out. Lightning had killed him and the grass around him was scoured. Old Tom was our very best horse. Jim, old Dan and one other small horse was all we had left. Father bought another team and we managed to keep going using the oxen to do the sod breaking. We had to break out a certain number of acres on the "tree claim" each year. We sat out ten acres of trees.

Father, two of the boys and I went to Beaver Creek, pulled and dug enough Cottonwood, Box Elder and Ash trees from one to three feet high to plant that ten acres. They lived a few years by keeping them cultivated. I visited the old place years later...there was just one lone ash left.

The summer passed and winter approaching. Joe passed his examination, received his permit and was ready to start teaching his first school. I believe there were ten scholars enrolled. We gathered up our old school books again; Joe had brought a few new ones home with him. The fathers built benches for us to sit on but there were no desks. Father made me a special double bench so who ever had to share my books could sit close enough so we could both see to read. One day when a boy was sitting with me, he had a pin and was pushing it in and out of his pants leg while he was absorbed his book. I hit the pin and it stuck his leg; he jumped up and the bench tipped and I fell off on the floor. We both missed our recess for that performance. I was fourteen and the oldest girl in school and the biggest tomboy. The old dug-out caved in but memories of our first school days in Nebraska was always remembered and talked about. All have passed on but my sister Rebecca, six years my junior,

TRAINING OF OXEN

Joe Dodge and myself. Many of the old timer's families still live on the homesteads their parents and grandparents settled on. It was a dry part of the country and our good crops were few and far between. Now they farm large tracts of land, combine the wheat. Summer fallow was discovered so each year part of the land rests while good crops of wheat are produced each year if there is no hail. The sod houses are all gone and modern homes have been built with gas to cook with and electricity to light up the houses, yards and barns.

A team of oxen brought a better price than two steers would be worth sold for beef. We would select two matched in color and size and break them to pull and drive. We put a ring in their noses with a rope tied to the ring, put harness on them and hitch them to the wagon. We could guide them by pulling on the rope. We would have a wild ride. A steer's nose is tender and they are not hard to hold. The noise of the wagon scared them and sometimes they would back up or lie down. A balky ox is worse than a balky mule, (or man). It was great sport and we had some narrow escapes but our wagon never upset and after the oxen would run as long and as fast as they could we would turn them around and start back to the house, then very quiet and cooperative.

One night a storm was threatening. When we saw a big black cloud we were always afraid of hail. We had turned the ponies out for the night and one of them had a little colt that we were very fond of and were afraid something might happen to him. The big canyon in front of our house was dry but after a deluge such as we often had it was a raging torrent, too swift to cross. We were worried that if it hailed the ponies would try to cross to get to shelter and the colt would be lost so we decided to get them across before the storm struck. It was growing dark and about all the light we had was when the lightning flashed. We whistled and called and ran in the direction where we thought they were. Finally they answered with a whinny and we found them and climbed on the backs of two of them and drove the others ahead to the barn. We got them all in and ran to the house just as the storm let loose in all its fury. We told father about going after the colt and bringing all the horses in. He yelled "pumpkin heads," his favorite name for us when we had done something foolish. He said the horses would have taken care of themselves and if it had hailed like it sometimes did we would have been killed. The colt, little Dan, was our pride and joy. Our horses were well trained. They would stand with their reins on the ground and came when we called them. We had other ponies but these were our cow ponies.

REMINISCENCE

That fall there was an epidemic of typhoid fever in the country. A few of our neighbors died. Brother Joe came down with it first and had a bad case and just about the time he was able to be up I came down with it. Father took me to the homestead. It was about six weeks before I recovered. There was not much left of me. Then brother Tom was sick then sister Anna. Mother and father did little that fall but take care of the sick. Dr. D.A. DeMay had moved in to the neighborhood, a young student doctor, but he pulled us all through. A Dr. Critsen was called in to assist.

Becca, Jim and Anna kept the ranch going. We had an early blizzard that fall. After the blizzard was over father went to the ranch to check on the children and stock. He found the children in bed and the dug-out completely covered. The children thought it was still night. He dug them out then went to see about the livestock. The shed was drifted over too but father found all the animals alive but one pig. The pigs huddled together to keep warm and one was smothered. After I recovered I went to McCook to school, McCook's first school.

McCook had grown to be a good size town. The railroad company had built machine shops and a round-house. We had a number of eating places, a high school and two churches, a number of stores and saloons. A bridge had been built across the river. A doctor had arrived. For many years mother had been doctor, nurse and diagnostician. Many times when she brought a baby in to the world she would have to stay for several days to take care of the mother or infant until they were strong enough to be left with their families.

The first circus in that part of the country was coming to McCook. I had been to one in Lafayette, Indiana, but did not remember much about it. It was a good circus. We loved the bare-back horseback riding. The girls jumping on and off while the horses were galloping and standing up forwards or backwards. We thought it the greatest part of the show. When we got home we got our horses out and tried to practice the great fete...however, our horses backs were not as fat and round. We fell off each time we tried to stand up and were never quite able to jump up on them while they were in motion. Our ponies were gentle so none of us were hurt and we did have a lot of fun trying. Those days girls had to ride side-saddle. Many times when I was chasing cattle I would ride clothespin fashion and found it much safer and easier but we were sure our parents never caught us. The girls in our crowd were all good riders and many times

twenty or thirty of us would ride horseback to a dance or other places of entertainment. The girls all wore long dresses and high top shoes. When we went to dances we would carry our dancing slippers and skirt in a bag and change when we arrived at the dance. We would dance until daylight then all ride home in the early morning hours, watching the sun come up. Riding side-saddle was quite dangerous at times. I was thrown from my horses many times and once my foot caught in the stirrup and I was dragged a short distance. I had been able to hang on to the reins so stopped the horse. Fortunately there was snow on the ground so I was not hurt. I had my last horseback ride when spending some time with my daughter Elma and her husband in the Big Horns at the age of 80. I rode our pony until we sold our farm at the age of 65.

We brought two dogs with us from Indiana and the boys taught them to chase wild animals. One night they had something cornered and suddenly they came out of the brush howling...brother John shot in to the bush then tried to pick up the dead animal and he began yelling. I turned out to be a porcupine and both dogs and John had to undergo a torturous experience having the quills pulled out of different places.

Once the dogs caught an antelope. One of the dogs caught it by the throat and the other by the nose. The antelope ran as far as it could dragging both dogs but the dogs never let loose. The antelope finally fell and the boys shot it. Another time they attacked a coyote. The coyote fought back and started chasing the dogs. The dogs ran towards home as fast as they could and never stopped until they were in the house. John and Jim were in the wagon and they ran the horses yelling all the while for some one to bring them a gun. Louie ran out the door with the gun, saw what was going on and shot at the coyote. She was so excited that she missed him and he took off after the first shot. The boys had a hard time teaching the dogs never to touch or attack snakes. The neighbors had lost a number of dogs from rattlesnake bite. Our dogs would grab one and shake it to death. Two young men who were brothers had their dog bitten by a rattlesnake shortly after they arrived, and the dog died. They were so discouraged they put the top back on their wagon, loaded their belongings and left for home. They never came back. Both men were bareheaded. The wind blew so hard if the hat was blown off the owner never saw it again. Most men tied strings to their hats. Some boasted that you could stand a board against a house and it would stand there for three

weeks before it fell down. There was also a story that the wind blew so hard it would blow the wall paper off the walls and the carpets off of the floors. That was a tall story as there was no wall paper on the walls or carpets on the floors. The people who turned back and went back east are the ones who told those stories and a lot of people believed them. One western poetically inclined wrote,

"We like the western country fine, we think it very good. Where the wind pumps all the water and the cows chop all the wood." And that was one thing we had plenty of, WIND, but not so much dust as in later years after the sod was turned and fields cultivated. In later years when we were able to have windmills the wind was a great blessing. We did not have cyclones then, they came later, but we did have fresh air. Nebraska still has the reputation as a windy belt. Years later it was called the Dust Bowl when dust blew in from southern states in clouds, which lasted for weeks and months. Trees had been chopped down and there was nothing to stop the wind. Later when people knew trees not break the wind as well as hold moisture a project was started and trees were again planted in groves along the roads and fields.

After crops began to yield well we had hordes of grasshoppers at different times. Crops were stripped to the ground. Kansas had the distinction of having had the greatest number and greatest grasshoppers in size, but Nebraska had them too. The children would catch big ones, make a harness for them out of corset stays and string, made carts out of spools and would have a great time watching them jump and pull their loads. Our only toys or amusement was different types created in our minds and looking back we did some quite ingenious inventions. Some of the grasshoppers were very pretty with different colors and bright markings. At times the sky would be so filled with them that they were like clouds.

After we began to plant alfalfa different types of chemicals and schemes to get rid of them. But at that time nothing seemed to be very effective as it seemed they could breed faster than they could be killed. One fellow said, at least, they made good fertilizer. Our eastern cousins would not believe the stories about the number and size of the pests, so we caught a few of the biggest ones, put them in a box with food and air-holes and mailed them back and they were alive at the end of their journey and jumped out of the box and momentarily caused quite a panic.

I remember a battle of ants we children watched for a day, the only time we ever had the opportunity of witnessing this great conflict. It seemed one army was marching west and the other east. Each group was a different color, one red and the other black. They met and neither would pass the other or go around. There were miles of prairie but they stood their ground. They would clash, roll over and over until the end. One morning we found thousands of dead ones, both red and black but no live ones so we never knew if there were some survivors who marched on. We concluded that they were no more intelligent than people, with all this big beautiful world God gave us to enjoy, with room for all. We kill, destroy and in our wake leave devastation. What fools mortals be! I have never forgotten that experience and have often wondered if, today, there could be some solution or explanation. It would be interesting to know.

My brothers trapped a number of different animals in the winter months. Badgers, coyotes, skunks, civits etc. They sold the hides but we got the fragrance free. The boys were told that baby skunks have no odor but brother John learned the truth about that rumor. One day he was out with his girl riding around in his top buggy, the first top buggy to appear in that part of the country and he was naturally very proud of it. He saw a baby skunk, caught it and put it in his lap in the buggy, and he and his lady friend were having a lot of fun with the cute little kitten when it became frightened and let them have it. They buried their clothes, and he washed his buggy so many times without satisfactory results, that he finally sprayed it with perfume and even then it was a long time before the odor disappeared. He never again caught a skunk at any age.

When a girl I was always trying to see how fast I could do things. One day when the boys were cleaning their traps I was watching them. I said a coyote must be awfully slow or it could jerk its foot out of a trap before it snapped shut. I bet I could touch the tongue of the trap with my finger and get my hand back before the trap closed. John bet me a dollar that I couldn't. When I started to set the trap John suggested I try a stick first, then my finger, if I was quick enough to get the stick out before the snap. I tried the stick, fortunately, and John won the bet.

The only fruit we had was wild fruit. In time father planted apple, cherry and peach trees and they all bore an abundance of fruit but before that time wild plums and choke-cherries were our only fruit and each fall we gathered baskets of it for canning jellies, jams and preserves. Of

course each time we went to pick them we all got chiggers in our skin and some of us got poison oak. One time John, Lou and I drove to about where Traer is located now, and we picked six bushels of the biggest, most delicious plums we ever saw. When we got home mother asked us if we left any for any one else, but in that one patch there were so many that after we picked our six bushels you couldn't see where we had picked any. There was an abundance of everything that year. Our melons, fruit etc. did very well. Mother made a "butter" by mixing muskmellows and watermelon that fall and everyone thought it delicious. When we went to pick fruit we made a picnic outing out of it. We would take a basket of food and make a day of it. We learned to recognize poison oak and avoid it after some sad experiences. One time Joe and Jim had to spend a whole week in bed. Their eyes were swollen shut and they could not wear any clothes. One time father had a seige with poison oak or ivy, as it was sometimes called, that he slept on the ground with just a sheet wrapped around him.

One summer we had a friend, Susie Rook, from Lincoln come to visit us. She filed on a homestead near us and while "holding down her claim" often went with us to many parties, including our plummung trips. Brother Joe, a neighbor, Truvie Benjamin, Susie and I drove over by Driftwood Canyon for plums and decided to cut across the hills on our way home, past a watermelon patch we knew was there. We were in a wagon and drove too close to the edge of a bank when it gave way and we started to plunge down the bank in to the canyon below. The bottom was muddy from recent rains. The wagon caught on a tree stump upside down, the team hanging head down in the harness. Susie landed on her head and shoulders in the mud, I under the wagon with the spring seat across my back and my nose in the dirt and a two bushel sack of plums over my head. After the others picked themselves up and realized what had happened they began looking for me. I was knocked out for a moment, but finally became conscious enough to call them so they would know where I was. They lifted the box enough so I could crawl out, the team still hanging, but they hadn't moved. We thought their necks were broken. The boys had to cut the harness to extricate them and after they were led down the bank to the bottom they did not seem any worse for their experience. The boys slid the wagon box down the bank, then the body and after patching harness, broken tongue etc. we were able to load up what was left of our cargo we managed to get out of the canyon up on to the road. We girls held the horses while the boys were loading and

after they got on their feet they sensed they had had a close shave, apparently, and began to put on a real spirited act. We girls had a hard time holding them and getting them quieted down so the boys could hitch them up again to the wagon. We were just about home when one of us thought about the melons. We were bruised and sore but no broken bones. We were stiff, especially our necks, for a long time. We had to comb one another's hair for a week as neither of us could get our arms high enough to even brush our hair. We did not tell the folks until a long time after, when mother was telling some one how tired we girls were after our plum trip, then we told the story in detail, feeling very brave and also we enjoyed the attention we were getting while telling our story. Mother had gone with us as far as Bill Grenchen's farm, where she stayed to visit while we were plumping. Mrs. Brennen was Carl Gregory one of the four girls of the Gregory family. They were another family of the earliest pioneers. Another family the Wickwires, and Connors. We all shared in one another's joys and sorrows, and visited together as often as possible. Distance meant nothing to us even tho our mode of transportation at that was slow.

About 1882 to 1885 the homestead land had been taken. People came in covered wagons and settled on other claims. I was glad to see some girls my age as most of our neighbors were bachelors. In 1884 a family from Avoca, Iowa settled about three miles west of my father's farm. Benjamin by name. Travis, Harry, Alvin, Bert and Ray and one girl, Clara. Mr. Benjamin kept a small country store and Post Office named Banksville. I married Harry in 1888 and we raised eight children. We began housekeeping in a sod house on his homestead, fifteen miles west of Banksville in Hitchcock County. We later went to Spokane, Washington, then to Butte, Montana, then returning to McCook, Nebraska. In 1903 we went to Saskatoon, Canada where Harry had gone to look for cheap land. We lived on the farm until the children had to leave the farm to go to school, when we moved to Saskatoon. During World War II in 1915. After all of the children had left home we sold out in Nebraska (Cozad) and went to Salem, Oregon where three of our daughters lived. We lived in Woodburn, Oregon until 1950 when Harry passed away at the age of 84.

RELPH

Records taken from William Relph Family Bible
William Relph

B. July 19, 1839 Belfonte Centre Co. Pennsylvania
D. September 19, 1908 Cedar Bluffs, Kansas

Married January 1, 1861 Lafayette, Indiana
Rebecca Jane Adams

B. March 7, 1844 Lafayette, Ind.

D. Feb. 24, 1934 McCook, Nebraska

Children

Louisa Margaret

B. October 7, 1861 Lafayette, Ind.

D. Feb. 16, 1883

Married May 1882 Red Willow, Co., Nebraska to
Ruben Gerver

John William

B. August 6, 1864 Lafayette, Ind.

D. August 11, 1935 California

Married Nov. 24, 1886-Red Willow, Co., Nebraska

Bertha J. Robinson

Joseph Hooker

B. November 11, 1866 Lafayette, Ind.

D. May 1925 California

M. September 17, 1890 Red Willow Co., Nebraska Flora

Flora G. Bell

Lily Myrtle

B. November 29, 1868 Lafayette, Ind.

D. June 26, 1959 Lincoln, Nebraska

M. March 31, 1888 Red Willow Co., Nebraska

Harry Benjamin

Thomas Jefferson

B. November 3, 1870 Lafayette, Ind.

D. July 16, 1917 Cedar Bluffs, Kansas

M. May 18, 1893 Red Willow Co., Nebraska

Dora Johnson

James Grant

B. November 2, 1872 Lafayette, Ind.

D. January 16, 1950 Eckley, Colorado

M. January 1, 1896 Red Willow Co., Nebraska

Flora Beckler

Rebecca Barker

B. February 16, 1875 Lafayette, Ind.

D. December 15, 1960 McCook, Nebraska

M. February 24, 1895 Red Willow Co., Nebraska

Charles Lofton

Mary Ann

B. December 22, 1876 Lafayette, Ind.
D. September 10, 1944 California
M. January 1, 1894 Red Willow Co., Nebraska
Charles Johnson

Lizzie Minnie

B. December 26, 1880 Red Willow Co., Nebraska
D. February 12, 1947 Cozad, Nebraska
M. March 25, 1901 Red Willow Co., Nebraska
James K. VanNortwick

Amanda Adeline

B. November 22, 1882 Red Willow Co., Nebraska
D. February 12, 1947 California
M. November 20, 1901 Red Willow Co., Nebraska
Robert VanNortwick

William Snyder Adams

B. February 24, 1813 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
D. November 12, 1854 West Point, Indiana

Married Rebecca Barker February 5, 1837
Philadelphia or Lancaster, Penn.

B. December 13, 1811 York Co., Penn.

D. May 11, 1899 Lafayette, Indiana

Children:

Ann Rugenia B. December 12, 1837 Philadelphia, Pa.

William James B. April 17, 1837 Rob Roy, Indiana.

Died July 28, 1867.

Wounded in the Civil War, died in Columbian
Hospital. Buried in Washington D.C., near this
hospital.

Louisa Margerite

B. April 17, 1841

Washington Lafayette

B. May 16, 1842 Lafayette, Ind.

D. November 1897 Quincy, Ill.

Rebecca Jane

B. March 7, 1844 Lafayette, Indiana

D. February 14, 1934 McCook, Nebraska

John Quincy

B. April 12, 1846 Lafayette, Ind.

D. March 13, 1882 Rolls Co., Missouri

Dolly Jefferson

B. April 12, 1846 Lafayette, Ind.

D. January 9, 1929 Lafayette, Ind.

Mary Adeline

B. March 4, 1850 West Point, Indiana
D. February 1934 Indianapolis, Indiana

Isadore

B. February 8, 1852 West Point, Indiana
D. February 15, 1852 West Point, Indiana

4535 N. Hamilton Ave.,
Chicago 25, Illinois,
October 24, 1943

CIVIL WAR RECORD

William Relph was born in Centre County, Belforte Pennsylvania. He enlisted July 26, 1862 at Lafayette, Indiana and served in Company C 72nd Regiment, Indiana Infantry Volunteers. He was discharged as a Corporal July 16, 1865. He was wounded on September 18-20, 1863, in the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia. In his pension records taken from the United States Archives, the following statement was written and signed by William Relph. "While in the battle at Chickamauga I received gun shot wound in the right shoulder. The ball entered at the top of the shoulder passed through the back and out through the shoulder blade, shattering the bone. I was treated at General Hospital number 19 by Sergeant Major Foy from September 19, 1863 to March 1, 1864. This wound was received while detached in CO. E 30th Regiment of Indiana (Volunteers)."

Signed

Wm. Relph
He received a pension of \$8.00 per month at this time and living near Transitville, Indiana and farming. On October 21, 1882 he requested a pension raise because of the disability of right arm and shoulder. His Post Office at that time was a Pioneer P.O. and Land Office at Stoughton, Red Willow County, Nebraska. His pension was raised to \$12.00 per month. In 1901 he requested another raise of his pension giving his address as Banksville, Nebraska, Red Willow Co. where Wm. Benjamin was postmaster. He wrote and signed the following statement. "I was wounded by gunshot in the right shoulder on Sept. 19, 1863 at Chickamauga, Ga. placed in an ambulance. We were mixed up with horses and wheels in the timber, either trampled by horses or run-over and upset. I do not know for sure. Arrived at Chattanooga, Tenn. in the nightplace in an old Rebel boxcar without blankets or other covering. I do not remember for how long and without medical or surgical care. We were then taken to Bridgeport, Alabama by freight train and to a hospital in Nashville, Tennessee."

Signed

Wm. Relph
In 1906 he was very helpless and bedfast and again applied for a raise of pension, he was given \$17.00. This petition was signed by Hon G.W. Norris of McCook, Nebraska.

At the time of his death in 1908 they were living near their son Thomas Relph at Cedar Bluffs, Kansas.

The Homestead is owned by a grandson Otis Relph and has always been in the Relph name.